STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

1999 ANNUAL REPORT

MISSOURI REHABILITATION SERVICES

FOR THE BLIND

December 29, 1999

Governor Mel Carnahan
State Capitol Building
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Governor Carnahan:

Enclosed you will find the 1999 annual report produced by the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. As in previous years, we have continued to provide Rehabilitation Services for the Blind with information, analysis and ideas for the improvement of services to persons who are blind or visually impaired. Our review of agency policies, procedures and operations, along with the public forums we hold in conjunction with our meetings, has given consumers an important source of input into the rehabilitation process for Missourians who are blind.

As Chairman of the Council I want to draw special attention to the continuing, consistent and increasing number of blind men and women who have gone to
work after having completed their training with RSB. The numbers demonstrate dollars well spent.

We hope that you find this report to be complete and informative. We stand prepared to answer any questions about this report, the operations of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind or the work of the Rehabilitation Council.

Sincerely,

Paul Mimms
Chairman

MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

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*Denotes members who left the Council during FY 1999

RSB DIRECTOR - SALLY HOWARD (Ex-Officio Member)

STAFF MEMBERS - RITA LYNCH
MICHAEL MERRICK

Blind Consumers Who Have Achieved Success Through
Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

An employer needed someone to assist him as an accounting clerk for his convenience store, but did not have the on-site space to accommodate an employee. An RSB consumer needed a job and had the appropriate skills and lived a very short distance away. The RSB counselor attempted to bring the two together, but the transportation problems inherent to living in a small town prevented an easy solution to the needs of both the employer and consumer. However, it happens that the consumer lives just down the street from the employer for whom she now works. The transportation problem was solved! The employer drops off receipts and invoices from the business, and our consumer performs her work duties at home, enabling her to meet her needs in regard to being a single mother of two small children while providing the opportunity for her to work as well. She now works 35 to 40 hours per week and both the employer and consumer are very happy with their unique arrangement.

Following a recent vision loss, an RSB consumer was visiting an eye doctor for an exam. After the exam, she informed the doctor that she had previously worked as a low vision counselor, and asked if his office had someone who offered similar services. This conversation led to her being offered a part-time volunteer position as a low vision counselor. This position started the ball rolling, with RSB providing additional training, equipment and consultative services, and eventually became a permanent position with the consumer working on a consultant basis with the eye clinic. With an upcoming move to a new location, this consumer's attitude has ensured that the plans include a new office space specifically for the services

she offers!

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF RSB OPERATIONS DURING FFY 1999

REFERRALS:
During Federal Fiscal Year 1999, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) opened new cases for 809 consumers. Of this group, 504 (62.3%) were female, 305 (37.7%) were male. The minimum age represented in the group was 14, the oldest was 97. Average age of new applicants for RSB services was 48 years of age. There were 143 African-Americans (17.6%), 5 American Indians (.6%) and 4 Asian applicants (.49%), along with 90 whose race was not specified. Out of 809 cases, 304 (37.6%) consumers reported a secondary disability. The most often reported secondary disability was diabetes mellitus (113 consumers), followed distantly by heart conditions (13 consumers) and other eye diseases (10 consumers).
The geographic distribution of new cases was even, with the largest number of referrals to a district office (129) going to St. Louis-South District Office, the smallest (101) to the Southwest District Office.

OPEN CASES
During FFY 1999, RSB had open cases on 2,348 consumers. Of those cases, 1,956 had been open for less than 5 years, 369 cases had been open between 5 and 10 years, 22 had been open between 10-15 years and one case had been open for more than 15 years.

STATUS 26
Demographics of Successful Cases

RSB closed 473 cases as having successfully completed their rehabilitation during FFY 1999. 340 of these closures (71.8%) were female consumers, 133 were male (28.2%). Of these, 213 were in the targeted categories of competitive-, self-employment or the Business Enterprise Program. An additional 14 persons were closed as successfully employed in sheltered employment. 246 consumers were closed as successfully employed by reaching their goal of becoming homemakers. Of the 213 target closures (competitive-, self- and BEP employment), 89 (41.7%) were for male consumers, 124 (58.3%) were females. 26 females from ethnic minorities were included in successful employment closures, as were 10 males. In all, consumers from ethnic minorities made up 16.9% of the successful target closures, exceeding the state's minority population of 13%, and nearly matching the demographics of new cases mentioned above. Of the 213 targeted successful closures, 132 (61.9%) retained their employment from prior to entry to RSB services. In comparison, only 81 persons (38.1%) found new employment as a result of RSB services. In employment closures overall, 165 of 213 consumers completed RSB services with a higher level of income compared to their entry level.

Secondary Disabilities
Of the 213 successful target closures, persons with identified secondary disabilities compared favorably with those for whom blindness is the sole disability. 69 persons (32.3%) who experienced secondary disabilities achieved successful employment. This very nearly mirrors the percentage of the incoming service population (new cases), in which 37.6% had a disability in addition to blindness.

Cost
In achieving the employment successes of the 213 consumers who are employed outside the home, RSB spent a total of $1,820,352. This averages out to $8,586 per case for successful closures. The highest amount spent on a case was $74,809; the smallest amount was $100. Funds were used equitably, as evidenced by the average spending per case on the following categories:

Caucasian Male: $8,060
Ethnic Minority Male: $11,803
Caucasian Female: $8,203
Ethnic Minority Female: $10,566

Spending on persons with secondary disabilities was also equitable, as evidenced by

the following table of average expenditures per closure:

Caucasian Male with Secondary Disability: $10,167
Caucasian Male with no Secondary Disability: $7,045
Caucasian Female with Secondary Disability: $10,154
Caucasian Female with no Secondary Disability: $7,342

Finally, the 246 consumers who were closed successfully as Homemakers were assisted at a total cost of $375,675. The average expenditure on this type of case is $1,545.

Outcomes:

The 213 targeted employment closures achieved by RSB consumers during FFY 1999 earn approximately $78,582 on a weekly basis (at time of closure). On an annual basis, this group would earn $4,086,264. If a tax rate of 20% existed, this group of consumers would repay the cost of their rehabilitation ($1,820,352) in just over two years. This example of rehabilitation paying for itself does not consider the even greater cost savings that result from the decrease in the cost of benefits such as Social Security, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, etc.
126 of the targeted closures were made by female consumers; 87 by males. This closely approximates the percentage of the referred population. The distribution of income appears to be equitable, as determined by comparing income at closure to race and gender in the following table:

Weekly Income by Category

Caucasian Male: $362
Caucasian Female: $329
Ethnic Minority Male: $361
Ethnic Minority Female: $375
Overall Male: $362
Overall Female: $338

Persons with secondary disabilities also faired consistently well compared to the average, as demonstrated by the following table:

Weekly Income by Secondary Disability

Caucasian Male with Secondary Disability: $383
Caucasian Male- no Secondary Disability: $352
Caucasian Female with Secondary Disability: $327
Caucasian Female- no Secondary Disability: $330
Ethnic Minority Female with Secondary Disability: $350
Ethnic Minority Female - no Secondary Disability: $386
NOTE: Ethnic minority male results not reported due to small size of sample

Of the 213 cases closed during FFY 1999, 37 were opened in status 32 (Post-Employment Services) at some time during the year.

CASES CLOSED AS UNSUCCESSFUL

In total, RSB closed 555 cases as unsuccessful. These fall into three categories; 08 (closed from application status prior to Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) development), 28 (closed after IPE services have been provided and 30 (closed after IPE development but before services have been delivered).

STATUS 08
216 cases were closed in status 08. These include applicants who were found ineligible for RSB services. Of this number, the reasons for closure are as follows:

Unable to Locate or Contact; or moved: 25
Refused services or further services: 42

Transferred to another agency:	36	
Failure to cooperate:	7	
No disabling condition:	82	
No vocational handicap:	4	
Transportation not feasible:	1	
All other reasons:		19

74 males and 142 females were closed in status 08, very closely matching the ratio of males to females among the population of new cases in 1999. Minorities are over-represented in cases closed in status 08, making up a total of 37.5% of the closures.

STATUS 28

223 consumers' cases were closed in status 28. These cases represent consumers who have completed an IPE and been provided services, then were closed as unsuccessful. The reasons for closure provided for this group are as follows:

Unable to Locate or Contact; or moved:	81	
Refused services or further services:	82	
Handicap too severe:	1	
Death:	26	
Client institutionalized:		6
Transferred to another agency:	1	
Failure to cooperate:	10	
No disabling condition:	2	
All other reasons:		14

111 males and 112 females were closed in status 28, with males over-represented in this type of closure (50% vs. 38% of the referred population or 40% of those successfully completing their rehabilitation). Minorities are represented in status 28 at a slightly higher rate compared to the referral group (27% as compared to 18% in the referral group). The area which is perhaps of the greatest concern is cost. In total, $1,809,828 have been expended over the life of the cases closed in status 28, averaging $8,915 per case. Of particular concern is the fact that 81 of these cases (36%) have been closed as "Unable to locate or contact; or moved" after RSB has expended considerable funds in their rehabilitation.

STATUS 30

116 cases were closed in status 30 (after having done an IPE, but before beginning services) during FFY 1999. In all, 61 male and 55 female consumers' cases were closed, with males again over-represented (57% vs. 38% of the referral group). Reasons given for closure of these cases include:

Unable to locate or contact; or moved:	51	
Handicap too severe:	1	
Refused services or further services:	50	
Death:	4	
Transferred to another agency:	1	
Client institutionalized:		4
Failure to cooperate:		2
No disabling condition:		1
All other reasons:		2

RSB INITIATIVES

Student Network

Student Network brings together students who are visually impaired or blind from secondary and post-secondary schools throughout the state for a weekend seminar aimed at improving their understanding of issues related to students with disabilities, self-improvement, advocacy and networking.

Because of concerns raised about Student Network by the NFB of Missouri, a

meeting was held in October, 1998 to discuss this project. RSB staff as well as representatives of the SRC, MCB and NFB attended the meeting. Concerns expressed during the meeting seemed to be confusion about the role of the Planning Committee, and these concerns were addressed by clarifying the responsibilities of the members of this committee. It was suggested to focus on the student, and that all new members be appointed to the Planning Committee. After discussion, the Council recommended that the currently planned Student Network be held in August, 1999. RSB scheduled the seminar for August 20-22, 1999, however, the event was canceled due to a lack of registrations. The seminar was then rescheduled for November, 1999, but was again canceled due to low registration. Student Network was last successfully conducted in 1997, when it was held on August 1-3; in 1996 it was held August 2-4.

College Student HandbookRSB introduced a handbook with commonly encountered questions and answers affecting college students supported by RSB. The handbook was put together by the College Task Force Committee, with representatives from counseling and supervisory staff and input from students. The purpose for the handbook is to inform consumers thinking about college what to expect and to enhance the self evaluation process. SRC members were given a copy of the draft and invited to give input to it before its implementation in January, 1999.

Mentor ProgramFollowing concerns expressed about the utilization of the Mentor Program, the SRC requested that a map be provided to Council members indicating the locations of matches made, mentees, and mentors enrolled in the program. A meeting was held in Kansas City with RSB, NFB and MCB and SRC representatives to look at the Mentor Program. Following this meeting, a task force was created which is made up of representatives of MCB, NFB, and RSB. The task force has visited each of the district offices to promote the Mentor Program. A trainer will be working with mentors in specific areas around the state, providing them with basic skills in working with newly assigned mentees.. During FY1998 & FY1999, there were 113 Mentors registered, working with 81 Mentees. This left a total of 113 Mentees without an assigned Mentor.

One-Stops
In Missouri, the Workforce Investment Board will be formed from the Missouri Training and Employment Council (MTEC). SRC staff contacted the Chairperson of MTEC and requested that they nominate someone for membership on the SRC. Although a member of the SRC is also a member of MTEC, the SRC has not received a nomination for appointment to the SRC.

An Assistive Technology subcommittee has been formed within the One-Stops, and the RSB deputy director is on the subcommittee. The subcommittee will be visiting One-Stops to see what their adaptive technology needs might be. Representatives from DVR, the Missouri Assistive Technology Project and RSB did visit One-Stops in St. Joseph, St Charles, Poplar Bluff and the Cape Girardeau areas. They found that computers at these sites are not accessible and materials are not available in alternate formats. A list of suggestions is being developed regarding what equipment and other alternate devices are needed in the One-Stops in order to make them accessible to Missourians who are blind.

RSB staff attended a briefing on the role of vocational rehabilitation in the Workforce Investment Act with supervisory staff from DVR. During this meeting, RSB and DVR staff discussed methods of ensuring access to vocational rehabilitation services for One-Stop customers, accessibility issues and the need for training for One-Stop staff in working with persons with disabilities.

Business Enterprise Program:In response to consumer concerns that training for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) was only available in Jefferson City, in November, 1998, the Council recommended to RSB that BEP should hold a full training session in the St. Louis area. The deputy director said RSB is looking for referrals for the BEP in the St. Louis area and anyone interested should contact their counselor or the BEP trainer. Despite RSB's efforts to locate individuals who cannot participate in the Jefferson City training program, just one consumer has

been identified who could participate only if the training were conducted in St. Louis.

BEP has submitted a bid for the Fort Leonard Wood Dining Facility contract. This bid was in response to a request for proposals that gave preference under the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Following BEP's bid application, an objection was registered by NISH, which sought to have the contract amended to allow preference in bidding to Wagner-Javits-ODay facilities, rather than the Randolph-Sheppard Act alone. In the event that BEP secures this contract, it is anticipated that as many as four to six vendors could be employed in servicing the contract.

During the period of this report, an attempt was made to close the BEP facility in the Missouri Capitol Building. The cafeteria was closed by county health inspectors and there was discussion of removing the facility from the BEP program and awarding it to a privately-contracted cafeteria operator. RSB and BEP staff entered discussion with health department, capitol building staff and legislators, with the result that BEP retained the facility, but with no on-site food preparation. Future plans include renovating the facility, with all personnel working there, including the manager, on salary (rather than as a contracted vendor). The Capitol Cafeteria would be used as a training facility, allowing a permanent, fixed site for training new BEP vendors without having to train them in a site run by a BEP vendor. RSB has received a great deal of positive feedback regarding this plan from the Missouri legislature and Capitol Building employees.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Public Forums/Public HearingsAt the February, 1999 meeting of the SRC, the Planning Committee recommended that the four public forums held in conjunction with the Council meetings each year plus a public forum at each state convention of the two consumer groups is sufficient to gather public input for the State Plan, and should take the place of the public hearings traditionally conducted by RSB. The committee further recommended that a short description of what the State Plan is be presented at each of the public forums. The Planning Committee would then study the public input as well as the draft of the amendments of the State Plan and goals and objectives of the agency in late November to come up with recommendations to be presented to the Council at its February meeting.

Mediation
Following the requirement to offer mediation as a method for settling disputes under the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, a presenter from the Mediation Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia gave the Council an overview of mediation. Following a brief discussion on training for mediators, the RSB deputy director said that RSB is planning to work with DVR in order to recruit, contract and train mediators. A draft of the RFP that was developed jointly by both agencies was presented to the Council. The Council recommended that in negotiating the development of the RFP for mediators with DVR, that RSB consider a requirement that prospective mediators participate in hearing officer training offered by RCEP, if available.

RSB Hearing
RSB had its first fair hearing since 1992, with the hearing officer ruling in favor of the consumer. There have been requests for hearings during the period (1992-1999) which were settled prior to the actual conduct of a hearing through the administrative review process or negotiation with the consumer..

Small Business Policy

As a result of a hearing in which the hearing officer ruled in favor of the consumer, RSB's assistant deputy director was tasked to write new policies regarding provision of vehicles for blind consumers, as well as policies to cover new or existing self-employment. Following the August, 1999 meeting of the SRC, the Council was told these policies were being developed and that they would have input in the development process. RSB enacted new "policy directives" in September, 1999, which affected these areas, (vehicle purchase and small business supports), without advice or input from the Council. The Program/Policy Committee of the SRC communicated with the deputy director, who agreed to rescind the policy directives pending SRC review and recommendations.

Fair Hearing OfficersAs of August, 1999, RSB had two hearing officers; one who wanted to resign, and one who was approved by the Council at its May meeting. Two more resumes have been received by RSB requesting to be considered as Fair Hearing Officers. One of the applicants was approved by the SRC, adding another to the pool of fair hearing officers. There was some question whether the other candidate meets the qualifications of the RFP for fair hearing officer. RSB will seek clarification on the applicant's qualifications and report on them at a future meeting.

Review of Hearing Officer Decisions
The deputy director informed the Council that because of the `98 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, there are three options regarding the review of hearing officer decisions. The first is to abide by the decision of the hearing officer with no review possible. The second option is to have the review done by someone within the Division of Family Services. The final option is to have a review of the decision of the hearing officer outside the state agency. The SRC recommended that reviews of the hearing officer's decisions be done by the Governor's Office.

Minority Outreach
RSB reported on the activities of the Minority Outreach Taskforce. Some of the activities mentioned were: focusing on participation in already established groups dealing with minorities; encouraging the Marketing Committee to use of minorities in agency brochures and display boards; having members attend seminars which provide excellent opportunities for improved sensitivity towards minorities receiving rehabilitation; and encouraging continued in-service presentations and participation in regional activities. RSB has also contracted with a public relations firm to work on outreach to minorities and employers. RSB plans to ask for funding to make this an ongoing endeavor.

APH Information
Following an FY98 recommendation of the SRC, the deputy director requested a legal opinion from DFS legal staff regarding RSB's access to information from the American Printing House state registry. She then contacted the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) with a request for the information. RSB did receive a copy of the APH state register from DESE, providing identification of every blind or visually impaired child known to DESE and greatly improving RSB's knowledge of the numbers/locations (by district) of those children.

RSB has begun working with this population by direct-mailing information to transition-aged students, ages 14 or older. Over 200 packets with facts about RSB services have been sent out to school districts, and RSB has received a number of responses. Plans are in place to mail to the remainder of those identified by the registry.

CONSUMER SAT Survey
Council members were given copies of the results of the FY 98 Consumer Satisfaction Survey at the May, 1999 meeting. Approximately 700 surveys were mailed out to consumers closed in FY 98, with 180 (25.7%) surveys completed and returned. The combined score was 3.865 on a range from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score. The questions relating to consumer choice were rated at 3.932; quality of service questions were rated at 3.97; pre-employment questions were rated at 3.5; employment questions were rated at 3.76; and overall satisfaction questions were rated at

3.865. Concern was expressed regarding the pre-employment score being considerably lower than other questions. A review of the respondents (which were coded to allow demographic accuracy) showed that over 50% were persons who had received job retention services, therefore, the questions about RSB's assistance in finding employment were meaningless to them. This result was supported by this report's analysis of performance data, in which closures during FY1999 also reflect a high percentage of job retention cases (Page 1).

The consumer survey for FY99 will be conducted by the University of Missouri-Columbia (UMC) Rehabilitation Counseling Program, under contract from the SRC and RSB. The Council will retain control over the content of the survey, and will receive both raw and analyzed data. Performance of the survey by UMC will permit its mailing on a quarterly basis, rather than the annual basis used in previous years.

SUFFICIENCY OF RSB BUDGET

RSB Budget
RSB submitted the following budget decision items for SFY 2001: Independence for Seniors, BEP Funding, Equipment for the Braille and Narration Center, and Professional Standards for Staff. Altogether, the budget request included an increase of six new full-time equivalents (FTEs). All the new budget items were reported as having been approved by Division of Family Services (DFS) and forwarded to the Governor's office.

The deputy director reminded the Council that when the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act came out, it was clear in its expectation that rehabilitation professionals meet the national qualification standards of a degree commensurate with CRC certification. RSB opted to use current year's funding to fund reclassification of the counselors, and to request continuing funding in the upcoming budget.

The Professional Standards for Staff item is to provide the funding necessary to reposition staff to meet the new standard of "qualified personnel" required by the 1998 Amendments. Repositioning of counselors is already underway, using existing funds. Rehabilitation Teachers, O&M Specialists and other field staff job descriptions are now being revised to reflect the increased levels of salary and responsibility. Repositioning of these staff cannot take place without appropriation of funding to support the new salary structure.

The budget item concerning independence for seniors is necessary to provide additional funds for serving the Older Blind Services(OBS) and Independent Living (IL) populations. Currently, services are provided through the use of Older Blind grant funding, IL and, in some cases, VR funding for closures identified as "Homemakers." Services for the OBS and IL populations are severely restricted due to funding limitations, often precluding the purchase of necessary equipment and services. Although some of these consumers could be served as VR Homemakers, this funding is tenuous due to the concern that blind agencies feel they are penalized for working with Homemakers, and that use of VR funds for this type of closure could be prohibited by RSA in the future. With an ever expanding caseload of consumers who require IL/OBS services, the need for these funds will continue to increase for the foreseeable future.

The BEP decision item is needed to support the modifications to and development of the Capitol Cafeteria into a training facility for the BEP (as discussed in the section on Business Enterprise Program above).

SRC INITIATIVES

Consumer Choice Policies
As required by the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, RSB presented draft consumer choice written policies at the February, 1999 SRC meeting. Following review by the Program/Policy Committee, the Council recommended

changes to the two-page "consumer version" of the policy to make the language more consumer friendly. These changes were made and the SRC recommended the approval of the two policy documents.

Independent Living/Older Blind ServicesAt the November, 1998 meeting of the SRC, the Council adopted a position paper titled "Older Blind and Independent Living Needs of Individuals Who Are Blind and/or Severely Visually Impaired." The Older Blind Task Force, created of council members and others with interest in this service population, proposed to submit legislation to increase funding and services for independent living and older blind consumers.

The Older Blind Task Force met with an aide to the Lieutenant Governor in early December, and came away with two directions: the first was the suggestion to work on Medicaid reimbursement for low vision screening and other visual services administratively, and the second was to pursue changes legislatively to include independent living and older blind services by revising Section 209.010, RSMo. The Task Force produced a draft legislative proposal, which was submitted to Senator Wiggins for introduction as Senate Bill 408. SB 408 was heard in committee, but was never voted out.

The deputy director requested Council help in working on the Medicaid reimbursement issue. The SRC Chairman wrote a letter to RSB, recommending that a meeting be arranged by RSB with the Division of Medical Services, NFB, MCB and the Council to discuss this concern.

The deputy director and SRC staff met with staff from the Division of Medical Services (DMS) to discuss Medicaid coverage for low vision services. DMS plans to request a new budget item to cover low vision assessment services, and another budget request to cover low vision exams as a service separate from the normal visual examination. DMS is also doing a larger budget item that is related to a federal waver for augmentative and assistive communication, within which low vision aids and appliances may be included.

The Task Force met once again in September, 1999 to discuss renewing their legislative proposal for the upcoming legislative session.

Assistive Technology
Following comments and requests for assistance from consumers, the deputy director began researching the concept of an assistive technology help desk. Since RSB hired an assistive technology specialist in March, 1999, they have been exploring the possibility of establishing a technology help desk which could be accessed by an 800 number.   The Council formed an ad-hoc committee on technology to deal with the issue of a technology help desk, consisting of two SRC members and two RSB staff members.
RSB discussed the possibility of contracting for Help Desk services with the Missouri Assistive Technology Project. Co-locating with one of MATP's outreach centers and using staff already working in one of those centers would be a much simpler solution to the technology needs of our consumers, rather than creating a position within RSB. Unfortunately, the decision item did not get to the Legislature as it failed to make it through the DFS/DSS budget process.

RSB's technology specialist has created and will be distributing to the Help Desk Committee a resource document which lists companies that sell assistive technology as well as resources for obtaining assistive technology training. He suggested that this resource be put on the RSB website, as well as making it available in alternative formats. Development is also underway on creating an in-house document that deals with questions and answers regarding the various technologies that RSB staff are using. This document could also be used in evaluating those who wish to contract with RSB as rehabilitation engineers.

HB 401
The Missouri Legislature passed HB 401, the Blind Student Literacy Act. This legislation, for which the SRC provided input in 1998, creates regional blindness skills specialist positions to assist local school districts in meeting the needs of the

over 1,000 Missouri children who are blind or visually impaired. One of the components of this legislation is the creation of a joint-referral system between RSB and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. During the period of this report, RSB has been communicating with DESE on the creation of a Task Force on Blind Student Academic and Vocational Performance to advise education authorities on the needs and concerns of the blindness community, and taking the beginning steps in creating the referral system. An SRC member was selected by the Council to serve on the Task Force.

Statewide studies

The SRC and the Evaluation Committee discussed the need for statewide studies and how these could be conducted differently from those conducted in the past, when the Council's role was not as strong. The `98 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act call for a much stronger SRC role in conducting these studies. The first priority established by the committee was the need to identify and quantify the population that could conceivably benefit from RSB services. Studies are under way to gather information from sources that could help in this endeavor, such as the Social Security Administration, the Division of Medical Services, Division of Family Services, Department of Revenue, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and any others who might serve the same population. RSB has been asked by the SRC to develop a proposal for instituting a "blind registry," which is called for by state statute, although it has not been done in recent memory. The second priority, which will be undertaken once the first is in implementation, is to quantify the service needs for the population identified in the studies.

Actions Taken to Implement the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act

At the November, 1998 meeting of the SRC, the `98 Amendments were discussed and areas where change was necessary identified. A special meeting was proposed for early January, 1999; however, it was canceled due to weather concerns. At the February, 1999 regular meeting, the following issues were discussed in committee: 1) a new Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) will need to be written; 2) consumer choice policy and procedures need to be written; 3) methodology for Council involvement in setting goals and priorities for the State Plan needs to be developed; 4) Council involvement in statewide needs assessment needs to be discussed; and 5) plans, policies, and procedures for cooperation with DESE need to be created. All of these actions have been either completed or are in the implementation stages at the time of this report.

The Council structure has also been affected by the `98 Amendments. In October, 1998, the Governor's office was asked to increase the size of the SRC from 21 to 23, with the addition of positions for representatives of DESE and the MTEC Council. A DESE representative has been appointed, and the MTEC Council has been contacted regarding their supplying a representative to the SRC.

TABLE 1.
Fiscal Year 1999 Referrals
* 0f 809 new cases in FY 1999

Male

305 (37.7%)

Female

504 (62.3%)

Caucasian

657 (81.2%)

African-American

143 (17.6%)

American Indian/Other

10 (1.2%)

Secondary Disability

304 (37.6%)

W/out Secondary Disability

505 (62.4%)

TABLE 2
Age of Open Caseload:
*(Of 2,348 cases that were open at some time in FFY 1999)

0-5 years

5-10 years

10-15 years

Over 15 years

1,956

369

22

1

SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES (STATUS 26)

TABLE 3
Successful Employment Closures

Competitive Employment

174

Self-Employment

31

Business Enterprise Program

8

Sheltered Employment

14

Homemakers

246

TABLE 4.

Demographics of All Successful Closures (Status 26)
*of 473 cases

Male

133 (28.2%)

Female

340 (71.8%)

Ethnic Minority

59 (12.5%)

Homemakers

246 (52%)

Employed (outside the home)

227 (47.9%)

TABLE 5

Successful Targeted Closures*	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Male	89	41.7%
Female	124	58.3%
Ethnic Minority	36	16.9%
Job Retention**	132	61.9%
New Employment***	81	38.1%
With Secondary Disability	69	32.3%
W/out Secondary Disability	144	67.7%

* Targeted = Competitive, Self- and BEP Employment closures
** Job Retention = Closure where the work status was same at application as at closure
***New Employment = Closure where the work status has changed from application (i.e., from unemployed to self-employed)

TABLE 6
Average Cost of Targeted Closures:

Total Cost

Average:
(of 213)

Cau.
Male

Minority
Male

Cau.
Female

Minority
Female

$1,820,352

$8,586

$8,060

$11,803

$8,203

$10,566

TABLE 7
Income Comparison from Targeted Closures

Total Weekly Salary (213 cases)

$78,582

Average Weekly Salary

$369

MALE

FEMALE

Caucasian

$362

$329

Ethnic Minority

$361

$375

Overall

$362

$338

CASES CLOSED OTHER THAN SUCCESSFUL

TABLE 8
Cases Closed in Status 08*

Male

74 (34.3%)

Female

142 (65.7%)

Ethnic Minority

81 (37.5%)
*Closed following application but before Individualized Plan for Employment completed

TABLE 9
Cases Closed in Status 28*

Male

111 (50%)

Female

112 (50%)

Ethnic Minority

60 (27%)

Average Cost per Case

$8,915

Total Cost

$1,809,828
*Closed as unsuccessful following service delivery

TABLE 10
Cases Closed in Status 30*

Male

61 (52%)

Female

55 (48%)
*Cases closed following Individualized Plan for Employment development but prior to service delivery

TABLE 11
Reasons Given for Closures Other than Successful

REASON	Status 08	Status 28	Status 30
Unable to locate/moved	25	81	51
Refused services	42	82	50
Transferred to another agency	36	1	1
Failure to cooperate	7	10	2
No disabling condition	82	2	1
No vocational handicap			

4

Transportation not feasible

1

Death

26

4

Client institutionalized

6

4

Handicap too severe

1

1

All other reasons

19

14

2